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ABSTRACT

A review of theories of expectation as related to behavior shows a high correlation between educational leaders' perceptions of their faculties and the climate and quality of instructional programs. Thus, effective faculties and high quality educational programs could be linked to a particular type of leadership. Leaders who hold high expectations and assume that subordinates can be self-directed and seek responsibility are able to capitalize on untapped human resources. (Author/WD)

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LEADERSHIP EXPECTANCY

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Engineers of necessity design and build bridges to withstand far greater weight limits than the traffic demands. Many have hypothesized that human beings are designed like a bridge--capable of far greater achievements than are normally realized. In fact, some have speculated that in most cases human beings only achieve about five to ten percent of their capacity. Of course, there are many cultural and environmental factors which impact on human behavior and achievements. The thesis of this article addresses only one of these factors--namely expectancy, and more particularly, leadership expectancy.

The phenomenon of expectancy has been stated and researched both directly and indirectly by researchers and writers in many disciplines. Merton, the renowned sociologist, in his book Social Theory and Social Structure refers to the phenomenon of expectancy as the "self-fullfilling prophecy". He states that "the self-fullfilling prophecy is, in the beginning, a false definition of the situation envoking a new behavior which makes the original false concept come true."[1] W. I. Thomas, the Dean of American Sociologists, sets forth a theorem basic to the social sciences. "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences."[2] Robert E. Bills, in his book About People and Teaching, relates the phenomenon of expectancy to the self-concept and concludes that "Of the factors that determine

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our perceptions of reality, the most important is our view of ourselves. Each of us has a concept of himself and his behavior is consistent with this self-concept."[3] Bills' research is related primarily to the significance of the self-concept in the learning process as illustrated by the following quotation.

> "If I believe I am a poor reader, I will act in a manner consistent with my belief. I will avoid reading and will not gain much practice. If I am called upon to read in school, the teacher will perceive that I am a poor reader and probably will tell me so. This only confirms what I already know--that is that I am a poor reader so I will avoid reading whenever possible and will never become a good reader."[4]

Recently Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson have conducted extensive research related to an educational self-fullfilling prophecy referred to as "teacher expectancy". They support the proposition that a teacher's expectancy for her pupils' intellectual competence can come to serve as an educational self-fullfilling prophecy. Rosenthal and Jacobson see profound implications for their research. One is that teachers, once they learn that expectations can be self-fullfilling, will gain a new expectancy--"that children can learn more than they had believed possible."[5]

The above research and authoritative opinions seem to support the notion that expectations impact on the self-concept and have a way of becoming a self-fullfilling prophecy related to what a human being is capable of becoming. Relating the research to the theme of this article, namely leadership expectancy, the assumption can be made that if a leader's expectancy of a subordinate is high, then that subordinate will function at a

higher level. In other words, leader expectancy is highly correlated with subordinate behavior and achievement. In research conducted by this author related to a theory of educational leadership,[6] the conclusion was reached that the expectations we hold for others are highly related to the assumptions which we hold about the basic nature of man. In other words, if we support assumptions such as man is capable of self-direction, is constantly striving to improve his well-being and his effectiveness in his work: that he is basically cooperative: that he has the ability to identify and solve problems: then we are likely as leaders to hold a different set of expectations than we would if we supported contrary assumptions. The assumptions which we hold about people are demonstrated very vividly in McGregor's Theory X and Y. The basic assumptions about human nature included in his Theory X and Y are as follows:

Theory X

1. People inherently dislike work and will avoid it if they can.
2. People must be coerced, controlled, directed, and threatened in order to make them work.
3. The average human being prefers to be directed, wishes to avoid responsibility and has relatively little ambition.

Theory Y

1. The expenditure of physical and mental effort in work is as natural as play or rest.
2. People can exercise self-direction and self-control in the service of objectives to which they are committed.
3. The average human being learns, under proper conditions, not only to accept but to seek responsibility.[7]

Leadership behavior based on human nature depicted by McGregor in Theory X would lead to quite different expectations than leadership behavior which was based on Theory Y.

The validity and polar positions reflected in McGregor's Theory X and Y assumptions are debateable. An important point to keep in mind, however, is not the validity of the assumptions, but the realization that operating from different assumptions has significant implications for the expectations leaders communicate for others.

In summary, study, research, and empirical observations in the area of educational leadership have caused this author to reach the conclusion that there is a high correlation between the assumptions and perceptions which educational leaders have of their faculties and the climate and quality of instructional programs in educational settings. The fact that some schools "seem to have all the good teachers" could be a coincidence or due to an astute screening and selection process. Effective faculties and quality educational programs on the other hand, however, may be highly correlated with a particular type of leadership. Leaders who hold high expectations and operate on assumptions highlighted in McGregor's Theory Y seems to account for one of the variables impacting on human behavior which causes human beings to capitalize on untapped human resources. Sure there is much yet to be learned about the implications of leader-subordinate behavior, however, there seems to be sufficient evidence to indicate that leadership expectancy is a realistic phenomenon--one worth serious attention if we are to maximize our leadership effectiveness.

FOOTNOTES

1. Ray C. Phillips, Evaluation in Education (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing, Co., 1968) p. 72.

2. Ibid., p. 72.

3. Ibid., p. 73.

4. Ibid., p. 74.

5. Lenore Jacobson and Robert Rosenthal,"Education USA"(Washington, D.C.) September 25, 1967

6. Robert L. Saunders, Ray C. Phillips,and Harold T.Johnson, A Theory of Educational Leadership (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1966)

7. D. Wassenaar, "Behavioral Aspects of Management Part A" (San Jose, California: The Lansford Publishing Co, 1972)

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1. Phillips, Ray C. Evaluation in Education, Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1968.

2. Rosenthal, Robert and Jacobson, Lenore. Education USA, Washington, D.C.: September 25, 1967.

3. Saunders, Robert L.; Phillips, Ray C.; and Johnson, Harold T. A Theory of Educational Leadership, Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1966.

4. Wassenaar, D. "Behavioral Aspects of Management Part A", San Jose, California: The Lansford Publishing Co., 1972.